

Watch Me

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Summary: A case in Baltimore inadvertently leads to a possible break in the Jack case.

Watch Me

Watch Me Profiler and all its characters belong to Sander/Moses, Cynthia Saunders, NBC and the wonderful cast and crew. I'm just borrowing the excellent characters they gave us and I promise to put them right back where they belong and not hurt them. And not to make any money from any of them while they're here.

* * *

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Samantha Waters had barely made it to her desk when her boss walked in.

"Hey, Bailey." She put her bags down by the chair and took off her coat. "What's up?"

"Baltimore PD contacted me at seven this morning with an interesting case."

"Yeah? Better than the 'Jaguar'?" she asked jokingly.

He smiled. "Could be. Here's the file." He dropped a folder on her desk. "Briefing in the command center in ten minutes," he added as he walked out.

Eleven minutes later, Bailey shot a look at John Grant as he hurriedly slipped into the empty seat beside Sam. John gave him his best innocent look. When it didn't work, he gave up with a shrug and opened the file on the table in front of him.

Bailey stood next to a thin, dark-haired man in his late thirties. "This is Ike Wharton from the Baltimore PD." He introduced the team members seated around the table one by one. "Baltimore's come up with a case for us." Bailey said as he took a seat. "I'll let Ike tell you about it."

"Thanks, Malone." Wharton looked up at the buildings pictured on the large computer screen on the wall. "Four weeks ago last Friday, small bombs were set off at three abortion clinics in the Baltimore area. Three different clinics, all with different owners, all in different areas."

"At the same time?" John asked.

"No, they were detonated at three hour intervals. Six people were injured, two were killed. There was no warning, so although we evacuated all the abortion clinics in the area after the second bomb, we weren't able to stop the third one."

The before and after pictures of the buildings disappeared, replaced by a crime scene photo of a blonde woman on the ground, her head lying at an odd angle. "One week later, 27 year old Carrie Bentley was found in a small wooded area two blocks from her apartment complex in the suburbs. She'd been raped sometime during the night, and then her neck was broken."

"Last Friday," he continued, as a picture of a bank appeared on the screen, "this bank in downtown Baltimore was robbed." The video from the bank's surveillance camera began to play on the screen. The robber was dressed in black and wearing a ski mask that had been hidden by a large hood on his jacket until he walked into the bank. The video was cut short when the unidentified man shot out the surveillance cameras.

"The teller said that the man walked up to her and handed her a script of what she was to say during the robbery. After he had the money, he turned to the guard, pulled off his ski mask and shot the guard, then ran out the door. The guard's in stable condition, but he doesn't remember the incident yet, and he's the only one who got a good look at the guy."

Sam made a note in her file. "Does the teller remember what was in the script?"

"Better," Wharton answered. "He left the script with her. The text should be somewhere in your file."

"So what makes you think these three crimes are linked?" John asked.

"This," Wharton said, holding up a silver toy gun sealed in an evidence bag. George displayed an enlarged picture of the gun on the screen. "A toy gun like this was left at every crime scene."

He laid the gun on the table in front of Nathan, who looked at it closely. "Hey, this is a Sergeant Skidmore gun." Everyone turned and looked at him.

"You mean that cop show on TV?" John asked.

"Yeah. My nephew got two of these for Christmas. Made me play cops and robbers with him for hours," he added with a grin. "I got real familiar with this gun."

George had been typing non-stop since Nathan identified the gun. "That's it! I thought those crimes sounded familiar." He punched a few more keys. "Those three crimes were the plots of the last three episodes of *Sergeant Skidmore*."

"George, you actually watch those TV cop shows?" John laughed.

"Hey, I happen to know you've seen *Die Hard* 26 times," George shot back.

Bailey gave them both silencing looks. "George, when did these episodes air?"

"Each one aired the Friday before the crime was committed in Baltimore."

"So he watches Friday's show, then waits a week to copy it," Sam said. "Why?"

"He needed time to plan?" John suggested.

"Maybe." She turned to Wharton. "Can you get us a copy of the four most recent shows as they aired in Baltimore, commercials and all?"

"Sure. I can have them here this afternoon."

"We can pick them up after we visit the crime scenes," Bailey said. "We leave in 20 minutes."

Bailey, Sam, and John visited each of the crime scenes, but came up with nothing new. They stopped at Wharton's precinct office for the tape before going back to Atlanta.

When they returned, John joined Sam at the table in the command center to watch the tape. "Sure you don't want me to go for some popcorn?" he joked as she put the tape into the machine.

Sam wrinkled her nose at him. "I don't think this is the kind of show that goes well with food."

"Oh, come on, Sam. If you can eat after going to a crime scene, you can eat during this." He leaned back in his chair. "It's Hollywood. They always glamorize murder and mutilation."

The show came on at that point, saving Sam from having to answer. They watched the first episode in relative silence, except for some minor heckling from John. Halfway through the second episode there was a news break with coverage of the copycat's first crime. The news break ended and the show picked up with Sergeant Skidmore walking into a bar looking for a witness. A beautiful blonde waitress wearing skimpy clothes that clung to her full figure walked over to the Sergeant and began fawning all over him.

"Yeah, like that happens to cops in real life," John muttered. Sam gave no indication that she even heard him. "Sam? Earth to Sam."

She picked up the remote and hit rewind.

"Don't worry, you haven't missed anything," John remarked. When she didn't respond he leaned up and looked over her shoulder. "What are you looking for?"

She pressed play at the start of the newsbreak. "His crime is on the show."

John looked totally clueless. "It's getting late, I must be slow."

She turned to him. "He's on the show. By committing his crime on Friday, he makes the newsbreak on the show every week. That makes him part of the show--in his mind anyway."

"So this guy has such a thing for the show that not only does he copy the crimes, he waits to copy them until right before it airs so he can be on the news during the show?"

Sam nodded. "So then the question is, why this show?"

"Probably some psycho actor who didn't get a part on it," John said, half-jokingly.

"No, if that were the case he'd be more likely to commit his crime during the show to try and interrupt the broadcast." She thought for a moment. "Did George get the fan mail information?"

John reached for a stack of files in the center of the table.

"'Sergeant Skidmore', aka Alan Knack, says his agent pulls any fan mail that's out of the ordinary in any way and files it, envelope and all. They faxed us the ones from the last two months." He handed her the top file, pulled the next one off and opened it, then paused. "What are we looking for?"

"Well, I think we can rule out hate mail. This guy likes 'Skidmore', he likes the show, he wants to be a part of it. Look for someone who praises Skidmore. Someone who doesn't appear to realize that it's just a TV show and not real life."

"Someone with no life." John added. Sam gave him a look and then turned her attention to file in front of her.

John was about half way through the thick stack in his file when he came across a letter that looked promising. He leafed through the next few letters and saw that they were from the same person. He counted 12 letters over a space of four months.

"I think I might have something here." He stacked the letters together and handed them to Sam.

"What is it?"

"Sergeant Skidmore's biggest fan, apparently. The letters are signed 'Derek'."

Sam took the letters from him. After reading two of them she looked back up at John. "We should see if we can trace these."

John stood up. "There's a post office box on the return address, shouldn't be too hard, if he used his own name." He leaned over Sam to write down the address.

"Great. I'm gonna stay here and finish reading these, then I need to look something up--I'll meet up with you in my office a little later?"

"Sure." He headed for his desk, leaving her alone with the letters.

Ten minutes later Sam stopped by John's desk on her way to her office. He was pacing behind his desk, holding the phone to his ear with the mouthpiece next to his neck. "Any luck?" she asked, juggling all the files from the case, the videotape and her water bottle.

"Not yet. The box is in Laguna Niguel, California. The post office has me on hold while they check."

Sam nodded. "I'll be in my office." She stopped to try to blow a section of hair off of her eyes. "Let me know when you find out," she said, still blowing at her hair as she tried to shift everything she was carrying to get one hand free to push the hair back into place.

"You got it." John reached out suddenly and tucked her hair back behind her ear for her.

She looked up at him, wide-eyed. "Thanks."

"No problem," he answered softly. They stared at each other for a second until a voice at the other end of the phone line interrupted. "Yeah," he responded, as he turned away from Sam and began pacing again. "No, 1595, not 5095! Sure, I'll hold." He sighed. "Californians," he said in disgust and turned to face Sam again, but she was gone.

A few minutes later, John knocked on the door to Sam's office and walked in. "The post office box was registered to a D. Merryfield, but he discontinued the box six weeks ago." He sat down in the chair in front of Sam's desk.

"Does he live in Laguna Niguel?" Sam asked, not looking up from her computer.

"A Derek Merryfield lived there when the last phone directory was put out. Still checking to see if he lives there now." He leaned forward to try and get a look at her computer screen. "What are you doing?"

"Surfing the net," Sam said with a lopsided grin. She glanced at John

and noticed the surprised look on his face. "I'm checking out TV newsgroups and forums for posts that might match the letters. They could have an electronic trail that would lead us to this 'Derek'."

John sat back in the chair and grinned. "Sam, you've gone cyber on me."

She smiled and gave him another brief glance. "Well, I'm not saying *I* can track it, I need George for that. But I think I could spot a message from--" She stopped to focus even more intently on the computer screen.

"Find something?" John walked behind her desk to look over her shoulder.

"Maybe."

He leaned in closer to read the screen. "'Skidmore is the best detective in the world. The man who can outsmart Skidmore would be the greatest criminal mind ever.'" He turned slightly to look at Sam. "It's signed 'D'. For Derek?"

"Let's find out." She called George, who looked up the newsgroup post on his computer and promised to call when he had it traced.

"Now what?" John asked as he went back to his seat.

Sam worked the computer again. "Now we look at the most recent episode and find out what the next crime will be. A few seconds later she had the description. "Skidmore has to track terrorists after learning they are planning to attack the nation's capital." She frowned. "Not enough information. I'm sure I can find a better description." She started typing again.

For a few moments, her typing was the only sound in the office. "Here we go." She read silently for a minute, then shook her head. "The terrorists on Friday's show didn't commit any crimes. He stopped them before they could do anything."

"So will he take the week off?"

"I don't think so..." Sam read a little more. "The bank robber from last week came back and made an attempt on the guard's life while he was still in the hospital." She looked up at John. "Is the guard from Baltimore still in the hospital?"

"Yeah. They don't expect him to be out for another week or so."

"Then that's his next victim."

"How do you figure that?"

"He's already gotten himself into the character of the bank robber. He shot the guard, exactly like the robber from the show. He's going to want to finish it, he needs to finish it."

The next morning, George had traced the newsgroup post to a web-based e-mail account, and from there to a Baltimore internet service provider. The account was registered to an Eloise Wengert. When Sam tried to contact her, she was told Wengert was on a three month vacation overseas. She went to Bailey's office and filled him in on the new developments. The two of them headed for the command center to find John and George. John had been watching the most recent episode of *Sergeant Skidmore*, but he paused it as Sam walked in. She told them what she had found out.

"He must have figured out her password somehow, and he's been using her account," George suggested.

John dropped the remote onto the table. "Maybe he knows her, knows she's not around and it's safe to use her account?"

"It's possible," Sam said as she sat down. "But it's too late to track her down now. He's going to strike tonight or tomorrow." She turned to John. "Do you have the details on how the crime was committed on the show?"

He held up his note pad. "I took notes. I was just going through one more time to see if I'd missed anything."

Bailey sat down. "The Baltimore PD has the hospital guarded. But I think we need to be there. Sam, any idea of when he might hit?"

"I'd say as close to the time the TV killer went to the hospital as he can get without getting caught."

John looked in his notes. "The guy on TV went to the hospital sometime in early afternoon."

"Probably anytime after noon tomorrow, then."

"So we'll go up in the morning and be waiting for him."

Nathan walked into the command center. "We've got trouble. Jack's been here." He held up a white box. "He left his calling card at the front door."

Half an hour later, John knocked on Sam's office door. She looked up from her computer.

"Hey." He walked into the room and sat down. "Thought I'd come see how you're doing."

She pushed the laptop out of the way a little. "Okay. I was looking to see if I couldn't find another post by Merryfield under a different e-mail address. No luck so far."

John nodded. "Grace has finished the preliminary forensics on the 'present' Jack left. No fingerprints, nothing traceable. Just a red rose and the note. 'I'm watching.'"

Sam didn't look surprised. "As if I needed a reminder."

"They've finished reviewing the videotapes from the surveillance

cameras. There was no trace of the person who left that box at the door." John got up and walked to the window. "You know, sometimes I just feel like taking you and Chloe somewhere where Jack will never find you."

"There is no such place," Sam said with a resigned sigh. "Besides, it's not your job to protect us."

He turned to look at her. "Then whose is it? Coop's? He's doing a hell of a job!"

Sam walked over and shut the door, then came back to stand in front of John. "It's **my** job. Just mine. I don't need my own personal protector." She went back to her seat behind the desk. "Go save somebody else's world."

"I can't." He went back to his seat as well. "I seem to be stuck in yours."

"I don't see anything tying you here." She indicated the door with a nod of her head. "You can leave anytime you want."

"Well... some ropes aren't visible," he replied softly.

The ringing of the phone interrupted the conversation. Sam stared at John for a brief moment before reaching for the phone. "Hello?"

John sighed loudly, then left the office. Sam stared after him until he was out of sight, then turned her attention to the phone call.

The next morning Bailey, Sam, John, and Nathan were gathered near the nurses' station on the floor where the security guard was recovering.

"There are two policemen and an agent on the guard's door, we have agents and police at all the parameters of the building." Bailey looked at John and Nathan. "I want you two to coordinate the outside agents. John, take the west side of the building, Nathan, you take the east. I'm going to be at the south end and Wharton's at the north. Sam," he turned to her, "I want you to stay near the guard's door. See if you can pick Merryfield out of the crowd before he gets to the door. The picture we have isn't that recent, so we don't know how much he's changed his looks. You're our best shot at getting him before he tries to get inside." He looked around at the group. "Any questions?" No one said anything. "Good, then let's get going."

Sam had been wandering the hall outside the guard's door for two hours. She knew every scuff mark on the walls, not to mention anything in writing anywhere in the hallway. She nodded to the policemen as she made yet another pass by the door, then continued on down the hall, ending at the nurses' station. As she turned to go back down the hall, a man standing by the elevators caught her eye. He was turned mostly away from her so that she could only see a partial profile. Something about him looked familiar. As she stared, he turned so she could see his whole face. She didn't even need to look at the picture to know this was Derek Merryfield.

Just then he looked up and saw her staring. He began backing up slowly, making his way down the hall to an exit. Sam followed him down the hall and into a stairway, which led to an exit in the basement. The door opened into an alley. Sam stepped out and looked left and right, but there was no sign of him. She made a quick choice and went left down the alley, her gun in her hand. At the end of the alley she had three possible routes to choose from. She stood at the intersection, trying to decide, when she felt a gun barrel at the back of her neck.

"Don't move." Sam dropped her gun onto the ground in front of her and put her hands up in the air.

"I'm not going to hurt you Derek. I just want to talk to you."

"I don't think so. You're here with Skidmore, aren't you? Where is he?"

"He's not here, Derek. He--"

"Don't lie to me!" He pushed the barrel into her neck until it hurt. "I want to talk to Skidmore. Now!"

"Okay, okay. I'll take you to him, but you're going to have to give me the gun." Sam tried to turn around, but he stopped her with his hand.

"I'm not buying." Sam heard a noise behind her, and then felt a sharp pain in her head before the world went blank.

"Sam? Come on, Sam, wake up." Sam opened her eyes to see John leaning over her. "She's awake," he called out to someone else, then he looked back down at her.

"Hey, welcome back to the world."

Sam started to sit up, but the pain in her head made it difficult. John helped her into a sitting position, supporting her back against his arm. A paramedic appeared to take a look at the bump on her head.

"What happened?" she asked John as the paramedic gave her the once over.

"We were hoping you could tell us," he replied. "We heard a shot, and when we got here, you were out cold and Merryfield was dead."

"Dead?" Sam pulled away from the paramedic and tried to stand up. John helped her to her feet. With his help, she walked over to the suspect, who was still lying where he'd been shot to death. Agents were searching his clothes for any kind of evidence that might be hidden there.

"How did this happen?"

John gave her a strange look. "You don't know?" She looked at him

blankly. "He was shot with your gun. We figured you shot him in a struggle and then fell and hit your head."

"The last thing I remember, Merryfield had a gun to my head, my gun was on the ground, and I was trying to talk him down. Then I heard a noise, my head felt like it exploded, and..." she shrugged. "That's it."

Bailey walked up as she was finishing her recollection of the events. "I think I have something that may explain what happened," he said somberly. He held up a white piece of paper with his handkerchief.

"What's that?" Sam asked. He handed it to her, handkerchief and all. She looked at the writing on the paper, and her face went pale. John's hand shot out to support her in case she passed out.

"I'm okay," she insisted. She handed the note to John.

"'The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away'," he read. He looked at Bailey, then at Sam. "And a drawing of a rose. Jack?" From the look on both of their faces, he didn't need an answer. But Sam gave one anyway.

"Jack saved my life."

Sam was sitting in her office a few days later when John knocked and came in. "How are you feeling?" he asked as he sat down.

"Okay. The bump is pretty much gone, and my head doesn't ache so much anymore."

"Good." He paused for a second. "How about mentally?"

She gave him a surprised look. "Fine," she answered, looking away from him. When he didn't say anything else, she was forced to look at him. One look at his face and she knew he wouldn't accept that answer. "I will be fine," she amended, opening her desk drawer and pretending to look for a pencil to avoid looking at John.

"It's a tough one to deal with, Jack saving you."

"Yeah, well, if he thinks that's going to get him anywhere, I hope he holds his breath," she replied, then slammed the drawer shut. "Sorry."

"Hey, don't apologize. You've been so quiet ever since it happened. You need to let it out."

"Did I miss you getting your psych degree over the last few days?"

He looked at her levelly. "You don't need a degree to know about dealing with some situations. Owing your life to a despicable creep isn't easy in any form."

Sam thought briefly about what John had told them about his father. "I know. Sorry again."

"I told you, you don't need to apologize. Just remember, if you need someone to talk to, I'm here."

She looked at him for a long moment, then nodded. "Thanks. I *will* remember, I promise."

He got up. "By the way, Grace found a partial print on that note from the crime scene. Could be Jack was in such a hurry he forgot his gloves."

"Any matches?"

"Not yet. We'll see." He smiled and walked out. Sam stared after him, then turned back to the folder on her desk.

The End... for now

End
file.